

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 22, line 25 with the following amended paragraph:

-- For purposes of clarity the structural details of the preferred embodiments of Figure 6-8, are explained with reference to coupling assemblies 16' and 16" as indicated in the aforementioned Figures. It is again to be emphasized that the structural components of the coupling assemblies 16' and 16" may be similar[[ly]]. One feature of the different embodiments of Figure 6-8 is the ability to accomplish a quick and efficient attachment and release of the components of the respective coupling assemblies 16' and 16", such as while utilizing only a single hand of the user. Further, attachment can be accomplished without the physical depression or other manipulation of the spring biased plunger 51 or any similar component.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 30, line 12 with the following amended paragraph:

-- In at least one embodiment, the actuation interface 166 is disposed in a communicative relationship with a voice activated control module 110, also as described herein, thereby allowing the electromotive release mechanism 160 to be remotely actuated. One further embodiment of the present invention comprises a manual release mechanism 167 interconnected to the actuation interface

166[[, as]]. As illustrated in Figure 27, the manual release mechanism 167 is structured to permit manual actuation of the electromotive release mechanism 160, thereby allowing the first component 18' and the second component 22' to be quickly and easily detached from one another.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 34, line 9 with the following amended paragraph:

-- In addition to the ability to achieve easy and effective engagement or attachment of the components of the coupling assembly 16', at least one embodiment of present invention comprises an electromotive propulsion mechanism 170, as illustrated in Figure 28, structured to at least temporarily impart a separation force between the first component 18' and the second component 22'. More in particular, the electromotive propulsion mechanism 170 of the present invention comprises at least one propulsion member 172[[,]] ~~however.~~ However, in one preferred embodiment, the electromotive propulsion mechanism 170 comprises a plurality of propulsion members 172 disposed in a spaced apart relation to one another, as illustrated in Figure 28. The propulsion members 172 preferably comprise an elongated configuration, as illustrated, and are disposed adjacent a propulsion interface 174 formed between abutting portions of the first component 18' and the second component 22' of the coupling assembly 16', as best shown in Figure

28A.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 44, line 13 with the following amended paragraph:

-- Additional preferred embodiments of the present invention are shown in Figures 9, ~~and Figures~~ 10 and 11, and relate to an activation assembly generally indicated as ~~[[at]]~~ 80 or 82, respectively. With regard to the embodiment of Figure 9, the activation assembly 80 includes a housing 84 having an at least partially hollow interior for the mounting and enclosure of a drive mechanism 85 structured such that the proximal end of the lead 10 may be connected to a portion thereof. In at least one embodiment, the drive mechanism 85 ~~comprising~~ comprises at least a storage or take-up spool indicated in phantom lines as 86. The take-up spool 86 is rotationally mounted on the interior of the housing 84 and, more specifically, is operated by the drive mechanism 85 which may further include a drive motor, such as is schematically represented in phantom line as 88. The drive motor 88 is preferably electrically powered and is specifically structured to be reversible so as to rotate the take-up spool 86 in opposite directions. The opposite directions of rotation of the drive motor 88 serve to either retract or release the lead 10 thereby allowing complete control over a tethered animal attached to the distal or free end of the lead 10. By virtue of the drive mechanism 85

comprising the drive motor 88 and the take-up spool 86, a user or handler of the subject leash assembly is allowed to avoid the disadvantages associated with spring driven, retraction structures of the type typically found in conventional retractable leash assemblies. The drive mechanism 85 may also utilize magnetic propulsion, as described above, to further facilitate the release and/or retraction of the lead 10 by the drive mechanism 85.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 45, line 16 with the following amended paragraph:

-- In one preferred embodiment, the activation assembly 80 further comprises a release control mechanism structured to regulate the rate of release of the lead 10 from the housing 84 of the activation assembly 80, upon detection of a predetermined condition or control set point. More specifically, the release control mechanism is structured to either substantially stop the release of the lead 10 from the housing 84, or to attenuate the rate of release of the lead 10. The predetermined condition or set point may include a particular velocity of release of the lead 10 from the housing 84, or a particular acceleration of the release of the lead 10 from the housing 84. In at least one embodiment, the release control mechanism is structured to cooperatively associate with the drive mechanism 85 to either substantially stop or attenuate the release of the lead 10 from the housing 84. In order

to facilitate attenuation of the release of the lead 10, the release control mechanism may incorporate a computerized time delay program which allows the handler to preselect a degree of attenuation for the rate of release of the lead 10 from the housing 84 as appropriate, based upon the size of the animal being controlled with the leash assembly. Additionally, the computer program is also ~~being~~ structured to control the velocity of the drive motor 88, in accordance with the preselected degree of attenuation, upon detection of the predetermined condition.